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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 003257

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: CODEL BLUNT MEETING WITH FM GUL: US-TU COOPERATION
THROUGHOUT REGION

REF: A. ANKARA 765

[1](#)B. ANKARA 784

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for Reasons 1/4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a May 30 meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Gul, a congressional delegation led by Rep. Roy Blunt (R-MO) expressed appreciation for the bilateral relationship and Turkey's assistance with Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East. The delegation asked that Turkey play a constructive role toward a diplomatic solution with Iran and expressed dismay at the February HAMAS visit. They urged resolution of the Armenian "genocide" issue and pushed for progress on the Halki Seminary and status of churches. FM Gul responded that the U.S.-Turkey relationship is strong; Turkey is ready to play an effective role in this region. Turkey will accept the result of a historical study and is in talks with Armenia regarding a joint commission; the Armenian diaspora, however, wants to keep the issue political. He defended the HAMAS visit; HAMAS needed to get a strong message and closing diplomatic doors is not effective. He stated that progress should be made on the church issue once parliament passes a new foundations law. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Representatives Roy Blunt (R-MO), Steny Hoyer (D-MD), James Clyburn (D-SC), Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) and Sam Graves (R-MO) and staffers Brian Diffell and Bill Cable comprised the delegation.

Relationship is Strong

[1](#)3. (C) Representative Blunt said the Turkey-U.S. relationship has been important to the U.S. for a long time. We have moved beyond the March 2003 vote and are grateful for Turkey's efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. FM Gul asserted that the bilateral relationship was one of the main pillars of Turkey's foreign policy, noting the U.S. and Turkey have similar views on such key issues as Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East. Gul, who characterized the relationship as strong and getting stronger, urged more consultation, not only government to government but people to people as well.

Turkey's Regional Role and Iran

14. (C) Gul said Turkey recognizes it has a unique role to play in this region and is giving Iran a strong message. Representative Clyburn responded that Turkey is certainly well-placed and hoped the GOT would prove be an effective vehicle for solving regional problems. Representative Frelinghuysen added that Turkey is a key player; for a diplomatic solution to work in Iran, we need Turkey's partnership. Gul said nuclear weapons are bad both for Turkey and for its neighbors.

The Armenian Issue

15. (C) Representative Hoyer asked about the proposed historical commission of academics and experts to study the 1915 Armenian "genocide" issue. Gul explained that during World War I, tragically, millions of lives, including those of Turks in the Balkans, were lost on four war fronts. Armenians were citizens of the Ottoman empire with high-level positions, including six government ministers and several Ambassadors. Russia provoked Armenian revolts. Turkey to opened all of its civilian and military archives for scholars to study the issue.

16. (C) Turkey, said Gul, is prepared to face the results of any historical commission but the Armenian diaspora wants to keep the issue political. When pressed by Hoyer, Gul stated

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that from the GOT,s point of view, anyone could join the study commission -- German and Russian scholars, too. Turkey is holding talks with Armenia about the issue, and discussions are ongoing. While Turkey does not have diplomatic relations with Armenia, the GOT was one of the first to recognize Armenia as a country. Turkey and Armenia have strong trade ties, direct flights between cities and cultural activities. Some 50,000 Armenians work in Turkey and send remittances back to their families.

February HAMAS Visit: HAMAS Got Our Message

17. (C) Representative Hoyer stated that the U.S. views HAMAS as a terrorist organization and asked what HAMAS said to the GOT during its controversial February 2006 visit to Ankara (reftels). Gul said Turkey is unique in that it enjoys good relations with both Israelis and Palestinians. Gul had warned HAMAS that they had to change, as it is now responsible for the Palestinian people; urged it to make a good first impression after the election; and pushed HAMAS to declare that Palestine will live side-by-side with Israel in peace and cooperation. HAMAS should act democratically and follow the roadmap. Gul observed that HAMAS was democratically elected. Isolating it completely is not good; the international community should leave the door open a crack and show them the right direction.

18. (C) Representative Blunt noted that both Turkey and the U.S. had been victims of terrorists. The U.S. cannot accept HAMAS; it is a terrorist organization. Talking to its leaders is akin to the U.S. talking with al-Qaeda or the PKK. Gul responded that HAMAS was elected by the Palestinian people, although the vote was more against Fatah,s corruption and maladministration. When asked what HAMAS' response was to the two state solution push, Gul responded that HAMAS is not sophisticated enough to see what is good and what is bad.

Cyprus

¶9. (C) On Cyprus, Gul stressed Turkey had done everything to solve the problem. The Annan plan was supported by the U.S., EU and the world. Together, all had shown leadership. In the past, there was a perception that Greek Cypriots wanted unification and the Turkish Cypriots rejected it; now everyone can see that the opposite is true, and the Greek Cypriots are being intransigent. Turkey appreciates the U.S. approach.

Iraq/PKK: The U.S. Must Do More

¶10. (C) Gul urged further action against the PKK in Iraq; the U.S. must do more. The PKK is using a friendly country, Turkey's neighbor, as a safe haven. Turkey has suffered considerably from PKK terrorism. Representative Blunt affirmed the U.S. commitment to help on the PKK, but also observed the inconsistency of Turkey's point on Hamas. Gul responded that the PKK is different from HAMAS; the PKK has no justification for terrorism. The PKK is attacking Turkish citizens and soldiers and seeks to divide Turkey.

Greece: Halki Seminary, Patriarch, Status of Churches

¶11. (C) Representative Frelinghuysen noted he represented a large Greek community and asked about Halki Seminary, churches in Turkey and the status of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I. Gul described religious freedom as the main pillar of Turkey's democracy but acknowledged some problems. He noted the Istanbul Synod has six non-Turkish members,

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which the GOT allows although it is technically against the law. Gul also referred to the new foundations law, which he hopes parliament will pass within a few weeks. This law would provide for restitution of properties earlier seized by the state from religious foundations. Gul stated that churches were allowed to operate. He offered the example of 60,000 Germans who live along the coast and have numerous active churches.

¶12. (C) Frelinghuysen noted that both Turkey and Greece enjoy booming economies. Gul said the Greeks have invested \$2.5 billion in Turkey and recently bought two Turkish banks, which was welcome.

¶13. (U) The congressional delegation did not have a chance to clear this message before departing Turkey.

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